

***Five-goal
Blues show
no mercy***

Wycombe Wanderers 5, Clapton 0

WYCOMBE Wanderers, fielding a much changed side due to injuries, still managed to put five goals past bottom club Clapton at Loakes Park on Saturday for three more Rothmans Isthmian League points and their second £40 bonus of the season, (writes Stuart Earp).

After the excitement of last Tuesday's F.A. Cup victory over Croydon, this game threatened to be something of an anti-climax. But the players, with the news of manager Brian Lee's resignation still fresh in their minds, stuck to their task well although they were never at their best.

Clapton's victory over Oxford last Saturday halted a run of 16 consecutive league defeats but they were out-classed in every department on Saturday and showed why they are suffering such a disastrous season. The only amateur club in Division One, few of their team were up to the general standard of the league and unless some much needed cash is injected into the club, they look doomed to Division Two.

Facing defeat after defeat every week, Clapton could well be excused for desperation tactics on the field. But to their credit, they seldom reverted to over-physical play and they kept working until the final whistle.

Against a team of Wycombe's standards, however, they could hardly expect to come off lightly and it may be as well the Blues were below strength. The home side had so much time and space, they sometimes didn't know what to do with it, and a spell in the first half was riddled with mistakes. By the end of the match though, they were bombarding the visitors goal as Clapton tired visibly.

There were many changes in the side. Peter Spittle came in for his first game since rejoining Wycombe in between the posts while Paul Birdseye was replaced by Dave Alexander. Dave Bullock came in for John Delaney, who was ill and new signing Bruce Macrae from Wantage was the substitute.

Wanderers didn't take long to open their account. In the second minute Dylan Evans laid the ball off nicely to Tony Horseman and his low cross was nodded home by Geoff Anthony with Clapton's defence stretched in the middle. It is not often Geoff scores with his head and apparently I missed the one against Croydon last Tuesday, which was credited to Keith Mead.

From the start, it was obvious Wanderers were going to have things much their own way. Clapton defended doggedly but gave away possession all too readily. With Terry Reardon showing improved form in midfield, he provided a steady service to the front men and Anthony proved more than a handful for both full backs on the wings.

Goal number two came after 12 minutes when Alexander's long ball was taken first time by Evans. His chipped shot left goalkeeper Grant helpless and went in-off the far upright.

After that sound opening, Wanderers went off the boil for a long time. With the knowledge that they could beat a man individually, too many of them tried it once too often while several crosses finished up the wrong side of the bye-line.

Clapton kept on fighting and Spittle had to be alert to tip a fierce cross-shot from Steve Hamilton over the crossbar in the 38th minute. I suspect Peter was grateful for some real action as he had spent most of his time collecting the occasional back pass.

There was very little applause for Wycombe's first half performance at the interval but the crowds were soon warming their hands when Evans made it 3-0 nine minutes into the second half. This time Horseman stepped over Reardon's low cross and Dylan was left with only Grant to beat. Nine minutes later referee Gregory spotted John Kerslake pulling Mick Holifield back by the shirt inside his own penalty area and immediately awarded the penalty. Horseman drove the ball up the slope and right into the corner for his 16th goal of the season and then went straight off to be replaced by young Macrae.

Newcomer Macrae snatched the fifth and final goal in the 76th minute. He had earlier gone close with a left foot shot and this time he powered a header towards the net from Howard Kennedy's corner. Anthony jumped over the ball which bounced over the line to give Macrae a debut goal.

For the rest of the match it was one way traffic towards the Clapton net with Evans, Anthony and Macrae all going close. Reardon excelled in these closing stages but Clapton somehow managed to hang on without further loss until the final whistle.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle, D. Alexander, D. Bullock, K. Mead, R. Eaton, H. Kennedy, T. Reardon, M. Holifield, A. Horseman (sub B. Macrae 63 mins), D. Evans, G. Anthony.

CLAPTON: A. Grant, B. Messon, A. Taylor, R. Barbieri, J. Kerslake, S. Hamilton, T. Davis, F. Coster, P. Egan, L. Mendy, F. Jofinny. Sub D. Murphy (not used).

Referee: C. Gregory (Woking).

Half time: 2-0. **Goalscorers:** Anthony (2), Evans 2 (12, 54), Horseman pen (63), Macrae (76).